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By- James, C. Rodney
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The National Film Board of Canada has, through its films, achieved a world-wide influence, and its uniqueness lies in its administrative structure and its place in the Canadian Government which has enabled it to survive while similar organizations in other countries have succumbed to political and film industry pressures. This study offers a critical assessment of the reasons for the Board's success, with a view to formulating very general principles as to how a film board might be run successfully. The success of a film board is related to the formal structure of the board. National predisposition, though unmeasurable, is important. It is essential that the government be a social democracy, and that the commercial film industry not be too powerful. A more detailed comparative study of film boards all over the world which have similar aims is recommended, so as to determine what strengths, weaknesses, and problems they all have in common. (GO)

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THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA AND ITS TASK OF COMMUNICATION

C. Rodney James

The Ohio State University
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section		Page
I	SUMMARY	1
	A. Problem Statement	1
	B. Scope of the Study	1
	C. Objective to be Tested	1
	D. Method	2
	E. Results Obtained	2
	F. Highlights and Significance of Findings	3
	G. Recommendations for Further Action	4
II	INTRODUCTION	5
III	METHODS	11
IV	RESULTS AND FINDINGS	13
V	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	16
REFERENCES		19
BIBLIOGRAPHY		20

SUMMARY

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study was to make an analysis of the National Film Board of Canada in terms of both its educational and artistic achievements - to answer the questions of:

(1) How good is the film board idea? Does it fulfill the objectives set up by John Grierson, the first commissioner, and reconfirmed by the Board members twenty-five years later? These objectives are the production and distribution of films in the national interest and the fostering of an understanding of Canada at home and abroad.

(2) Assuming that NFB has been successful in serving the cause of democratic education, as well as advancing the art of the film and doing both at a minimal cost, how did it accomplish this task? Does the secret of its success lie in its formal structure, administration, personnel, production methods; or is it perhaps in a national predisposition to this form of governmental education? The answer as was expected lies in a combination of these variables.

Scope of the Study

This study was originally limited to an analysis of the National Film Board of Canada and the work done by that organization. However, in order to make a meaningful assessment of the Board's achievements, a limited amount of research was done on several related organizations in Australia, New Zealand, Ghana, Nigeria, Great Britain, and the United States. This was necessary to make judgments regarding National Film Board of Canada's success, from a comparative point of view and to determine what problems, if any, were common to <u>all</u> such operations. This knowledge thus made it possible to formulate several statements to explain the reasons for the success or failure of the film board type of government production unit, which can be applied on a broader basis than as an assessment of the National Film Board of Canada as a unique organization.

Objectives to be Tested

1. There is a relationship between the success of a film board in a particular country and the formal structure of that film board, i.e., its position in the overall governmental structure, its administration, its production and distribution methods and its personnel.

2. There is a relationship between the success of a film board in

a particular country and that country's national predisposition to foster this form of government film production, i.e., the type of government, attitude and strength of the existing commercial film industry and the attitude of the public toward this form of governmental information dissemination.

3. The National Film Board of Canada has unique features that can be singled out in its formal structure and in the national predisposition of Canada that are integral to its success as a producer of films of artistic and educational merit.

Method

This study involved a variety of techniques in the gathering of information.

1. First, there was a review of literature. This included both writings produced by the NFB itself, as well as articles from other sources that dealt with the Board and its films. The latter served as a partial guide to standards of criticism of NFB films and often as an indication of public, governmental and film industry attitudes toward the Board.

2. Second, with this information in hand, there was a critical analysis of NFB films themselves. This included (a) what did they try to do? (b) did they succeed artistically and, in the case of sponsored films, in pleasing the sponsor? and (c) did they meet with public acceptance?

3. Third, to gain deeper insight into the situation, a carefully formulated interview schedule was used with members of the Film Board, including both administrators as well as the production and distribution staff.

Results Obtained

With regard to the first objective it was found that there is a relationship between the success of a film board and the formal structure of that board. The following are the most important features.

1. First, with regard to the place of the film board in the government structure, strong legislation is a key factor - a government act that gives the board a definite job to do and a definite source of income; an act that gives the board control of its own administrative affairs and frees it from competition with and/or interference from other government and commercial organizations.

2. Second, an administration that actively works to encourage quality work by seeking talented personnel.

3. Third, a production program that gives the film-maker creative freedom.

4. Fourth, a system of film distribution that insures the delivery of the films produced to their intended audience.

National predisposition would also seem to be of importance. Nevertheless, this is almost impossible to measure since it is a rather vague term and contains a great number of variables - many more than are mentioned as objectives to be tested. However, those that are mentioned do seem to be of importance.

1. First, the type of government is most important. Film boards as autonomous, nonpartisan agencies exist only in social democracies. In nations with nondemocratic forms of government the film board is a direct propaganda agent of the state.

2. Second, the strength of the commercial film industry is the most important factor, since its attitudes are seldom very favorable towards government film production. A strong commercial industry is usually successful in curtailing an attempt by the government to create a film board.

3. Third, public attitude is important, but the role it plays is dependent on a great many variables. The important factor is that public opinion is aroused. This occurs when there is an issue, e.g., the question of creating a film board or the question of dissolving a film board already in existence.

The National Film Board of Canada was found to have unique features that could be singled out from the above listed findings. These features were found to be responsible for its success.

Highlights and Significance of Findings

Perhaps the most important aspect of this study was the shift in emphasis of what was considered to be the most important quality of The National Film Board of Canada. At the outset of the study, the most important quality of NFB of Canada was felt to be "survival ability." During the pre-war era, government film units were set up by the United States, Great Britain, and Canada to produce film in the national interest. The units in the United States and England succumbed to a combination of political and commercial pressures. The Canadian National Film Board, while it underwent a severe political crisis, emerged from the experience in a stronger political position than it had held before.

This in itself is a significant achievement, but is second in importance to the influence exerted by The National Film Board on government film production in the free world today. Following the war, a large number of government film units were created and most of these exist today. Many of them, e.g., Australia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and Israel, were created on the model of NFB of Canada. Personnel from these countries were sent to Canada to study methods of The National Film Board; also NFB personnel worked in the various countries aiding them in establishing film units.

Recommendations for Further Action

The value of the film board type of government information service is, at last, being recognized and an increasing number of governments are considering the creation of this kind of agency. While this study of The National Film Board of Canada is a worthwhile enterprise, the most important project would be to make a comparative study of a number of similar operations to determine what strengths, weaknesses and problems they have in common. This has been done in this study but only to a limited extent and as a "second thought" deviation from the original plan. Such a project as the one proposed would undoubtedly provide a more reliable and clearly defined set of criteria to explain the reasons for the success or failure of a planned film board than would the criteria based on the study of a single institution.

INTRODUCTION

The National Film Board of Canada represents, the most successful, democratic, government film production unit in existence. In 1965, The National Film Board celebrated its silver anniversary -- twenty-five years of service to the cause of national communication in a democratic nation.

Even today the film board's twenty-eight years of existence may seem rather modest achievement as compared to Hollywood film production, but it is a major one when compared to the United States Film Service; the British Empire Marketing Board, General Post Office and Crown Film unit; or the units set up in similar countries that failed to survive for more than a decade. The NFB, however, has done more than survive. It has produced a long list of excellent films that have been praised for their public service value, as well as for their artistic merit.

Before the formation of The National Film Board, commercial film production in Canada was limited to three independent companies in Vancouver, Montreal and Ottawa. These could hardly be considered as competition for Hollywood, whose products then and now provide the bulk of Canadian film entertainment.

From time to time small groups of enterprising Canadians formed companies to produce feature films. While approximately 300 of these were finished between 1914 and 1965, none of them ever received wide enough distribution to do much more than cover the original production cost and many of them did not even do this. The key to a successful film industry lies in the producer's ability to get his films into theaters, not simply to make them. The large theater chains in Canada were, and still are, controlled mainly by American and British interests. This served to complete the vicious circle surrounding the independent Canadian film-maker. Without assurance of distribution, money to produce films was difficult to obtain. When investors were willing to risk money, they were never willing to risk very much and the films produced were low budget and often hastily made products with a lackluster quality which destined them for obscurity.

The commercial companies wisely stayed out of the feature film game contenting themselves with the production of theatrical shorts and films for industry. Even this latter opportunity was not as lucrative as one might think. Many of the Canadian industries were subsidiaries of American firms and thus used the same American made promotional and advertising films as the parent companies.

Associated Screen News of Canada, begun in 1920, was the first company to emerge. It was begun as a branch of an American newsreel company. When the American company went out of business two years later, ASN of Canada continued on its own, providing news footage of Canadian events to all major film companies in the United States, the United

Kingdom and France. In 1932, ASN began its own series of original theatrical films. Running between ten and twenty minutes in length, the series called "Canadian Cameos" covered topical bits of Canadiana. This series continued until the company was sold in the mid-1950's, and became Associated Screen Laboratories.

The other two Pre-National Film Board companies were Vancouver Motion Pictures and Crawley Films, which were established just prior to the war and received most of their early work from The National Film Board. Thus, throughout the first thirty years of the century, Canada had little to offer in the commercial motion picute field. Bordering the United States with its well-developed industry, Canada found itself much in the same relationship as Belgium to France--overshadowed by the high quality-high quantity cutput of a powerful neighbor.

The one avenue open to Canadian film development was government film production, which developed well before similar efforts in both the United States and Great Britain. The provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan both had film units in the 1920's, which produced films for the provincial departments. These were, in part, educational films, but served mainly to promote tourism. The depression of the 1930's brought an end to the activities of both these organizations.

The two provincial units were organized on the same basis as the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau. This organization had its beginning in 1914 with the establishment of the Exhibits and Publicity Bureau by the Department of Trade and Commerce. Films were first produced in 1916, with a series called "Water Power," to survey the hydro-industrial resources of the country. By 1921 the unit had grown in stature and became the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau. Other government departments were required to consult the Bureau on all media needs. Films, still photos and slides were to be prepared for all departments by this central organization. This situation was short lived. The Department of Parks and Agriculture soon obtained exemptions and set up their own units.

The MPB, however, was kept busy producing travel films for the Department of Trade and Commerce. These became the mainstay of its activity. The films were distributed throughout the United States, Latin America, Europe and even the Far East. The Bureau soon achieved a wide reputation for its pioneering, attracting the attention of many other Commonwealth countries and encouraging them to embark on similar ventures.

The depression and the advent of sound films struck the Bureau a one-two punch. The provincial film units were discontinued almost immediately and the Motion Picture Bureau was forced to continue silent film production. Distribution figures plummeted. The Bureau was in an awkward position since much of its distribution came via films supplied at cost to the Canadian National Railway and several Canadian shipping lines. These commitments had to be honored, yet they brought no revenue. Theatrical distribution which would have brought in the needed funds to procure

sound equipment had practically disappeared because no one was interested in silent films.

Sound equipment was finally obtained in 1934. With nearly all of its international audience gone and few people with enough money to spend on vacations, the Bureau began to focus its efforts more on a national "interpretation" of Canada than on an international "selling" of the country. The films of the thirties depicted the role of Canada in the First World War through two feature films, Lest We Forget (1935) and Salute to Valour (1937); other major productions were Heritage (1938) and Unlocking Canada's Treasure Trove (1936) which dealt with agriculture and mining. While distribution figures improved, the Bureau was by no means in the favorable position it had held previously. The competition from other departmental units hindered development. A report from Ross McLean in the Canadian High Commissioner's office recommended improvements.

In 1938, the Canadian Government invited John Grierson to study the situation and submit a plan for a unified government film-producing organization. As a result of his proposal the National Film Act was passed on May 2, 1939, creating a National Film Board with authority to devise, from all the Government Departments' separate requirements, a unified policy, an integrated production schedule, and a plan for distribution to meet the needs of the respective Departments.[1,2]

Thus, The National Film Board was born out of the need for national and international education which Grierson had recognized in the early 1930's. Public speech and writing could not cope with communication needs in an increasingly complex world. Information had to be disseminated on a rapid, mass basis. At the time, the power of the motion picture as an instrument of propaganda had been demonstrated in the U.S.S.R. and Nazi Germany. If the free world was to survive, all means of public information and education had to be used to challenge the authoritarian standards. "Either education is for democracy and against authoritarianism, or it is for authoritarianism. The day of standing aside is over because the issue has become too vital. It is from now on an instrument of the state with a part to play in fulfilling the democratic idea. It has the job of relating the individual to the responsibilities of that idea."[3]

John Grierson, the first Film Commissioner of the seven-man Film Board, had considerable control over Canadian film making. As he saw it, the Board was to act as a public service agency to create in the Canadian people an understanding of the Nation's past, present, and future role in the world. As he put it, "A country is only as vital as its processes of self-education are vital."[4]

On June 11, 1941, the Motion Picture Bureau was absorbed by the National Film Board into one organization. Grierson now had powers to decide the course of production. A number of outstanding British filmmakers including Stewart Legg, Stanley Hawes, Raymond Spottiswoode and Norman McLaren were brought in to produce films and train the growing number of staff members.

Leisurely development was not possible since films were becoming a war weapon, helping to unite the Canadian home front and telling of Canada's contribution in the war effort. Two major film series were launched, "Canada Carries On," which covered home front and war activities and "World in Action," which dealt with broad political issues. Both were released in French as well as English to provide an in-depth political analysis of the issues involved in the war.

Theatrical distribution increased rapidly both in Canada and abroad. In Canada, however, theatrical distribution was only partially effective in getting the films to the population which was divided evenly between urban and rural areas. To reach the rural group, travelling projectionists were sent out with programs of films dealing not only with the war effort, but with subjects on child care, agriculture and nutrition. Similar circuits were set up in cities to reach workers through factories and trade unions.

By the end of the war the Film Board had grown from the thirty men in The Motion Picture Bureau to a staff of more than 800. Grierson and the British film-makers departed, leaving the operation in charge of Ross McLean who had been Grierson's assistant since the beginning of the war. The operation was run entirely by Canadians - men, such as Tom Daly, Guy Glover, Vincent Paquette, Stanley Jackson, James Beveridge, Donald Fraser and Michael Spencer.

With the end of the war the demand for war subjects ended. "World In Action" was dropped and "Canada Carries On" was changed to cover topical subjects of general interest. Films for government sponsors were now for peace-time needs and packaged as units dealing with various subjects. A good example is the group of four films made for the Department of National Health and Welfare. The "Mental Mechanisms" series - The Feeling of Rejection, The Feeling of Hostility, Over-Dependency and Feelings of Depression produced between 1947 and 1950 - have received world-wide acclaim and are still in use. Similar groups of films treated agricultural and industrial subjects.

The post-war era was one of recovery, and at the same time, one of conflict. Beginning in 1946 a number of politicians and members of the enlarged commercial film industry sought to have the Film Board discontinued, charging that it was competing unfairly with the film industry and was a waste of government money. A full investigation was made by the independent firm of Woods and Gordon and by the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts under the Hon. Vincent Massey.

As a result of the investigation the Board was found to be doing an excellent job though it was hampered by a poor budgeting system which treated the Board as any other Federal Department, failing to take into account the fact that unlike other departments The National Film Board received revenues as well as spent money. In 1950 the Film Act was revised to give the Board an adequate working capital and a new budgeting system.

The Board entered its third phase under the new Film Commissioner, W. Arthur Irwin. Distribution increased in the 1950's as more film circuits were formed. Operation of these had been turned over to community film councils after the war. While the Board supplied the films, it was the public that kept the operation functioning.

Film production turned more to a national cum international interpretation of Canada. The feature-length color film Royal Journey (1951) focused work attention on the Queen's visit to Canada. Films, such as Opera School and Musician in the Family dealt with the growing interest in the arts. Roughnecks, Railroaders, Herring Hunt, and City of Gold provided a social geography of Canada. The animated films of Norman McLaren drew world attention with their inventive techniques.

Under the third commissioner, Dr. Albert W. Trueman, the Board entered the television era in 1953. Quality dramatic films began to emerge along with a Canadian brand of cinéma vérité which was introduced in a series called "Candid Eye." In 1956 a French Canadian, Guy Roberge, was installed as the Commissioner. More and more production was becoming a bicultural affair as French-Canadian film makers were being hired and were producing films. The Board's move from Ottawa to Montreal and the demand for French language television material speeded this process.

Television is still a dominate influence in the 1960's as the Board goes into its twenty-ninth year of existence. Under Commissioner Hugo McPherson, however, new ground is being broken. Three feature films have been produced, LeGrand Rock, Waiting for Caroline and The Ernie Game as a part of the Board's contribution to Canada's Centennial. The huge multiscreen labyrinth at EXPO-67 constructed by the Board was one of the most popular exhibits. On a less spectacular but more important level, is a group of films for the Canadian poverty program. These are of three types. First: films to educate the general public with regard to the problems in the country. These are comparable to the films shown on network TV in the U. S. discussing the plight of the poor. Second: films to provide information for professional workers in the field. These consist of filmed interviews and discussions that serve to give a direct voice to the poor. These are much the same as the encounter between negroes and whites on the first Public Broadcast Laboratory program of this season. The third type of film can hardly be called a film at all. It is rather a use of film as a measuring and teaching tool. Motion pictures are used to record conditions and statements by the poor about these conditions. As various projects are instigated the films are used to discuss and analyze the progress, or lack of it, in the various communities. In some cases the local people are being taught by the Board staff to make these films themselves. This is a new and active use of the film medium which has implications that reach far beyond its standard passive use of reportage and gives the poor a public voice they have never had, as well as an opportunity to look critically at themselves from a new perspective.

With the exception of a 1951 doctoral dissertation there have been no critical writings on The National Film Board of Canada since the 1951 work, "Documentary Film and Democratic Government," by Richard MacCann of Harvard University. MacCann's work is an excellent study of the rise and fall of the United States Film Service, a film-board type of organization that existed in this country from 1936 to 1940. His study touched briefly on the British Government units under the Empire Marketing Board and the Post office, headed by John Grierson; and The National Film Board of Canada. His assessment of the latter was brief, critical and cursory, influenced to a great degree by the charges, which at the time, were being leveled at the Board. Since then he has completely reversed his position (verbally) which makes his early assessment of little value. He is at present engaged in re-working his study to include the work of the United States Office of War Information in film production and the activity of the United States Information Service. In this work (to be published) the section on The National Film Board will be deleted.

John Grierson's book, "Grierson on Documentary," originally published in 1946, has been revised and reprinted, but contains no really new information on The National Film Board of Canada. Perhaps the biography of Grierson, now in preparation by Professor Jack Ellis of Northwestern University, will contain some new information, not only on the Film Board but on Grierson's British units. These books have been mentioned briefly in a number of works, namely, "The Arts Enquiry," "The Factual Film," and Paul Rotha's "Documentary Film," which give fair historical accounts but offer little more than Grierson's own book.

Perhaps the most interesting study is a report on the only state-sponsored film agency in America, "The North Carolina Film Board: A Unique Program in Documentary and Educational Film Making," by Elmer Oettinger of the University of North Carolina. It gives an excellent account of this unit in the 1966 Yearbook of the Society of Cinematologists. The North Carolina Film Board is important since it was set-up by former NFB of Canada personnel and based on the Canadian model. Its rise and fall adds considerable evidence to the strength of the structure of NFB of Canada.

In making an analysis of The National Film Board of Canada a critical historical approach is used. Comparative studies of similar organizations would be extremely valuable, but as has been indicated above, little published information exists. Unpublished reports and memoranda from units in Australia, New Zealand, Ghana, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, South Africa and Israel are used to provide information in an attempt to make judgments regarding NFB of Canada's success from a comparative point of view with the hope of determining what problems are common to all such operations. This information has thus made it possible to formulate explanations of the success of NFB of Canada which can be applied on a broader basis to assess the progress of a similar organization and to provide information for the planning of a proposed organization.

The hypothesis or objectives of the study are thus seen in relation to its comparative nature to determine the following:

1. First, there is a relationship between the success of a film board in a particular country and the formal structure of that film board, i.e., its position in the overall governmental structure, its administration, its production and distribution methods, and its personnel.

2. Second, there is a relationship between the success of a film board in a particular country and that country's national predisposition to foster this form of government film production, i.e., the type of government, the attitude and strength of the existing commercial film industry, and the attitude of the public toward this form of governmental information dissemination.

3. Third, The National Film Board of Canada has unique features that can be singled out in its formal structure and in the national predisposition of Canada that are integral to its success as a producer of films of artistic and educational merit.

Because of the limited funds and the limited staff, i.e., one person, this study had to be directed to an analysis of NFB of Canada with only a secondary amount of research on related organizations. While the author did not obtain as much material from these secondary sources as he would have liked, enough data was gathered to permit the stating of several general principles to promote, if not insure, the survival of a film board.

METHODS

Preliminary research on the project was begun in March of 1966, by collecting all information on The National Film Board available at The Ohio State University. This consisted of a small amount of printed material found in The Ohio State University Library. Ten annual reports and some historical material were also obtained from the NFB information officer in Montreal. In addition, provisions were made for previewing a number of NFB films. These were provided from the Board's New York office. By mid-June approximately seventy films had been screened and analyzed.

On June 23, the author arrived in Montreal to begin the first period of information-gathering. This first trip was spent mainly on paper work--analyzing the materials in the NFB library and screening a representative group of films. By the end of July notes had been taken on some 150 additional films. Notes and Xerox copies of some 500 unpublished documents, as well as press clippings, reports, etc., dealing with the various activities of the Board were collected.

Returning to Columbus on August 4, the next two months were spent organizing this data and transferring a great amount of hand-written notes to type script. The second job was to prepare for the second trip in September. This involved the listing of documents that had yet to be obtained and the preparation for the interviews to be conducted.

Returning to Montreal on October 3, the author spent until November 4 interviewing some fifty members of the NFB staff. On this trip, two days were spent in Ottawa gathering information on the Liaison and Still Photo sections of the Board which are still located in that city. In addition to the interviews, library research and screening activities were continued. At the end of the stay, a mass of material, more than equalling that of the previous trip had been collected. By now enough data had been compiled to complete a first draft on eight of the twelve chapters of the final dissertation. The problem now was one of filling gaps rather than gulfs.

During the period of October 4, 1966 to May 1, 1967 materials were organized and an outline of the dissertation was prepared. In November writing was begun and by April the first three chapters totaling 166 pages were completed. The proposed length of the final work will be approximately 500 pages. The writing to date covers the development of the Canadian documentary from 1897 through 1950. The first chapter is an analysis of the pre-Film Board activities in Canada dealing, in the main, with the activities of the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau - the organization which preceded The National Film Board. The second and third chapters cover the creation of NFB in 1939, and follow its development through the war and post-war eras.

A third trip to Canada was made May 1 through May 26, 1967. By this time enough material had been compiled to complete a partial draft of the dissertation. During this trip, the author presented the first three chapters to members of the staff of NFB who read them and provided many useful comments. Interviews and film screenings continued. Emphasis on the former was with questions on how the film-board type of operation helped or hindered creative activity and with the kind of training the film-makers received.

With the completion of a final trip to Montreal, September 17, to October 14, the necessary information to finish the study was gathered. This included interviewing an important resource person - Gordon Sparling. Sparling has been in the motion picture industry since the early 1920's. He worked for Associated Screen News, the only newsreel company to survive in Canada, as well as for The National Film Board. He is also engaged in film research and has provided a great deal of valuable information.

The second task completed was to look at the major films produced by NFB during the past year. The remainder of the work included interviews with a number of film-makers who were on location shooting films or were otherwise not available during earlier visits. The author was also able to talk with the new Film Commissioner Hugo McPherson, who was

appointed in the summer of 1967. An interview with the Acting Commissioner, Grant McLean, regarding the future of the Board, its production potential and plans for expansion yielded some information.

The author was fortunate in being able to interview Stanley Hawes, an ex-NFB film-maker who is now head of the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit. Mr. Hawes provided some new insights into the problems faced by both the now defunct General Post Office Film Unit in Britian and his own unit in Australia. What he said strengthened the findings that all such government units face similar crises and growing pains.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

In terms of the first objective, i.e., the relationship of success of a film board to formal structure, the following can be noted. The legal status of the National Film Board of Canada was very important to its success. When John Grierson presented his plan for the Board he pressed for and received a governmental Act, passed by the Canadian Parliament, to establish the National Film Board. This act spelled out in clear terms the duties of the Board, making it sole producer of Government films and giving it a regular annual budget and freedom to set up its own film program.

The importance of these elements becomes obvious in comparing the National Film Board to its predecessor, the Motion Picture Bureau, or the units led by Grierson in England. The MPB was a good plan in name only. Without the strength of an act of Parliament, other departments soon formed their own units which lowered the efficiency of the operation. It was also tied directly to the Department of Trade and Commerce and as such served mainly as an arm of this one department, producing travelogs rather than interpretive films in the national interest.

This was not the case with the British Empire Marketing Board film unit which allowed film-makers a wide latitude in subjects, the object of EMB being to promote Commonwealth Trade. However, when the EMB was dissolved in 1932 the film unit was without funds. It was only through the skill of Grierson and others that the unit was moved intact to work for the General Post Office. Here again the situation was much like that of the MPB, with the unit having to limit its subject matter to fit the needs of a single government agency.

The importance of a regular and guaranteed source of money cannot be underestimated. Grierson learned that this can only be achieved through strong legislation giving the film unit a permanent status. The United States Film Service of Pare Lorentz suffered from this problem, as did the North Carolina Film Board. The United States Film Service began under the Resettlement Administration program in 1936. When this

was dissolved the unit moved to another agency. After several moves, the Film Service ran out of agencies that would finance it, and thus, it ended after a short, though memorable career.

The North Carolina Film Board was budgeted on an "experimental" basis. After making several films that were politically unpopular, the budget was simply not renewed. The British Crown Film unit that was the third incarnation of the EMB-GPO operation met a similar end, voted out of existence, not because it was unpopular but because it was simply felt to be unnecessary. When the National Film Board of Canada came under attack, pulling it out of operation was not a simple matter since it required a Parliamentary investigation to terminate it. This gave the Board an opportunity to present its case, which it did, and happily won a new lease on life.

The distribution policy of the Board was also instrumental in its success. The MPB found itself ham-strung in the late 1920's and early 30's when nearly all of its budget was going into the production of great quantities of prints which were supplied at cost to the railways and shipping lines. Distribution of the silent films thus continued, but at the cost of a world-wide theatrical market that could have been maintained had the Bureau bought the necessary equipment to produce sound films.

Grierson made it a strict policy that there would be no "giveaways." Theatrical chains would have to buy the Board's films. Free films were often refused on the basis of "if it's free it can't be any good" and "if it's free it's probably propaganda and also no good." His judgments proved to be right. Nevertheless, the total audience had to be reached. It was to achieve this that the traveling circuits were begun, but even here the free element was minimized as the people themselves were urged to buy the projection equipment through the film councils and to take over the mechanics of moving the film packages from community to community. The loyalty and support of this audience was critical when the Board came under attack.

The personnel of the NFB has always been hired on the basis of ability to learn and an interest in creative work. Unlike the civil servants of the MPB, the Film Board staff was recruited on a trial basis; those who showed promise were kept, those who did not were released. Most of those who remained gave as the reason for their coming the creative freedom the Board offered. Such a situation attracts the type of person who is willing to experiment and try new ideas and discourages those who are not. This coupled with the fact that the Board produces a greater variety of films than any organization of comparable size would seem to be the reasons for its record of outstanding films.

In terms of the second objective--national predisposition toward the Film Board operation--the following seems to hold true. Democratic governments appear to be the only type of governments that will tolerate such an organization. Many countries in the Communist bloc have state film agencies but these are all directly controlled by the party in

power and are used to disseminate party philosophy. This does not explain the role of the National Film Board of The Republic of South Africa, whose régime is not exactly "democratic" by American standards, yet is supposedly based on the Canadian model. Nor does it define the role of the United States Information Agency which is independent of both parties, yet disseminates information only to other countries and is forbidden by law to distribute films within the United States itself.

Within democracies, tolerance of such an organization seems to depend mainly on the strength and attitude of the existing film industry. In the United Kingdom the Empire Marketing Board unit did not arouse any great opposition in the private film industry, evidently because it was not considered large enough to constitute a threat. In the United States the United States Film Service met with minor opposition from Hollywood. It was not, however, until the war that Hollywood felt that there might be a threat from government film production. With the end of the war the industry lobbied effectively to see that the large Office of War Information organization ceased its internal dissemination of films. The success of this is evident today in the policy of the aforementioned United States Information Agency.

In Canada there was no film industry to complain when the Motion Picture Bureau was created. Even when the National Film Board was established there were no outcries, since the Film board began as a regulatory and not as a production agency. The relationship between the Motion Picture Bureau and Associated Screen News, the only large producer, was good. ASN did sound recording for the Bureau and some processing. While ASN might have liked the Bureau restricted or abolished, no overt moves were made to that effect.

During the war, production was booming. With contracts from a host of newly-created Federal agencies, the National Film Board subcontracted a considerable amount of work, work which served in many instances to subsidize budding film companies. The period of happiness ended with the war. With its budget cut and fewer contracts the Board no longer provided work for the industry which had grown on the war-time boom. Communist spy scandals in the Canadian Government and industry charges of unfair competition nearly destroyed the Board.

It was at this point and only in the case of this one particular film agency discussed herein that anything that could be called "public opinion" played a part in its destiny. The investigation into the Board's activities included surveys of the film councils and other small organizations using its product. While NFB was being attacked in the press and in Parliament, it was being highly praised and vigorously defended at the grass-roots level. It was this support that was the key factor in the Board's surviving the crisis of 1950.

In singling out unique features that have made the National Film Board of Canada what it is today, it becomes obvious that these are

interlocked in a legal-administrative-philosophical whole. Strong legislation, i.e., the Film Act, provided a dependable operating fund, a legal base safe from instant political liquidation and an autonomous production policy. This, in turn, proved attractive to talented filmmakers who produced good films. The circuit distribution program brought these films to the people who benefited from them and suggested ways to improve them. These people supported the Board in its hour of need, voicing their support through the channels opened by the investigation surveys which were a result of the legal strength of the Film Act. While this is over-simplifying what actually happened, it does bring into focus the main strength of the National Film Board of Canada and the reason for its success.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While it is possible to enumerate a number of principles explaining how the National Film Board of Canada was established and flourished in that country, it is not possible to transfer these principles into a set of rules that can be applied anywhere and will guarantee the success of a comparable organization. While the film agencies discussed in this report are similar, they are not matched. Each was subject to a number of individual pressures which were unique.

In discussing the success of the National Film Board of Canada, the role of Grierson and his forceful personality must not be minimized. The Motion Picture Bureau had <u>in writing</u> a provision whereby it was the sole producer of government films. However, there was no one in the Bureau who was willing or able to make this a working reality. Grierson had advantage that those in the MPB did not. He had had similar experiences and frustrations and it must be admitted that in England he had not been able to do much about them. Coming to Canada, however, he arrived as "The Expert," a man with an outstanding record and no human failings. Thus equipped, he was able to push through his plan for the Film Act without an undue amount of criticism or opposition. It must also be noted that the war, coming when it did, had a profound catalytic effect on the growth of the Board. Had the NFB developed in a peacetime situation, it is doubtful if its expansion would have been nearly so rapid.

Nevertheless, the soundness of the legal-philosophical-administrative ground work of the National Film Board of Canada cannot be denied and it would seem that while these bases cannot be applied as <u>rules</u> for success, they certainly appear to be worthwhile <u>guidelines</u> for it. Therefore, as guidelines - the following are presented as a base for a governmental unit of the Film Board type:

1. Strong legislation insuring the unit of:

   A. A dependable source of budget money.

   B. A clearly defined role in the government structure, i.e., to produce <u>all</u> films for <u>all</u> other departments.

   C. An autonomous administration allowing it to function as a free agent-determining its own production program.

   D. The power to defend itself via open hearings if attacked.

2. A production policy that will attract creative people, i.e., one allowing film-makers a certain amount of freedom to engage in experimentation in producing board films.

3. A distribution program that will get the board's films to the audiences. This may use existing channels, i.e., theaters, television or newly created ones, i.e., circuits.

4. A system of feed-back from the film users that will provide information as to their relative success. This includes liaison not only with audiences, but with the sponsoring departments who commission films to be made. NFB of Canada does both, though this phase of its operation has only been hinted at in the present report. MacCann, in his study, places heavy emphasis on this aspect.

Using the above guidelines, the question that next arises is one of their application. Perhaps the best case can be made for their use in setting up film boards in emerging nations. This has been done in two African Republics, Ghana and Nigeria, in 1962 and 1963. The initial success, unfortunately, has been curtailed by the civil disorders that have beset both of these countries in recent years. Nevertheless, the units in Australia and New Zealand appear to be functioning quite well, providing a kind of public information that could not be produced by private enterprise.

It is this ability that makes the film board a valuable asset to any government. While commercial firms could easily make all the films needed by government departments, they are not willing, nor could they be expected, to produce information films which could not insure a monetary return. It was in the <u>public information</u> area that both the United States Film Service and the North Carolina Film Board operated, and so it would seem, could they continue to operate, with the political climate permitting.

At the university level where photography departments provide film production services for other departments and in certain cases for state agencies as well, a film-board production set-up would benefit the state or university as well as it would a nation, for there are a number of neo-Motion Picture Bureau operations, expensive and inefficient, turning out dull promotional films at the university level. The only shortage seems to be of John Griersons to make them over into productive film boards.

A great deal of refinement is needed on the list of guidelines for success presented in this report, so that they may be more clearly stated and new ones added. As has been indicated earlier, there is a need for studies of film board operations around the world. To date the information is fragmentary and often superficial. No good comparative historical studies of these organizations exist. More important, this information which has been collected has not been readily available in any written form to those desiring it, e.g., government or other organizations wishing to create a film board. Thus the second major recommendation would be for the information obtained from the proposed studies to be made readily available. It is indeed ironic that in this age of mass communication, information on the workings of important mass media producers is passed almost exclusively by the <u>oldest</u> form of communication, word of mouth.

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2. For "An Act to Create a National Film Board." see Appendix D of Arts Enquiry, The Factual Film, pp. 228-237.

3. Grierson on Documentary, p. 157.

4. Ibid., p. 23.

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